Books and Authors

The Mafia

KINGDOM of CRIME

"THERE have been many secret societies devoted to evil-doing, but nothing like the strange combine of Sicilian families which forms this company of born lawbreakers."

In these terms the author, Frederic Sondern, a roving editor of the Reader's Digest magazine, spells out the unique character of the shadowy camarilla known as the Mafia in his "Brotherhood of Evil."

That they have operated long and profitably in the United States is generally known, but not until the Kefauver and McClellan senatorial committees began unpeeling their layers of concealment in recent years did the vast ramifications of the Mafia become apparent.

This book should carry that process a long stage further, since Mr. Sondern demonstrates in the clearest possible fashion just how extensively this "writing octupus" battens on the body politic of the United States. The author quotes experts as putting the Mafia's annual take, in illegal rackets of all kinds, at several billion dollars.

What complicates the problem of law enforcement is that the Mafia is not a centrally-directed secret society with chosen officers, but a loosely-knit association of families drawn from the same areas of Sicily and southern Italy, operating through generations of intermarriage without formally elected leaders. The Mafia is amorphous, hard to contain, but very, very real.

It was dragged out of the shadows into the bright light of public scrutiny by the lucky accident of a New York state trooper in stopping a car on its way to Apalachin, N.Y., one balmy November morning in 1957. The routine check of a driver's licence led directly to a meeting of the Mafia grand council at the home of one, Joe Barbara.

Much has still to be learned about the Apalachin meeting, but a great deal has already been uncovered—and Mr. Sondern knows as much about it as anyone outside the police. Some of the mafiosi are in jail at this writing, serving out contempt sentences. Like an entomologist dissecting verminous insects, he demonstrates the Mafai's interlocking interests in rackets of all kinds, skillfully integrated with legitimate businesses. He even goes to the extent of providing a genealogical table, but an unusual one, disclosing the traditional intermarriages among the mafiosi for generations past.

If you think people are helpless against all this, read Mr. Sondern's account of the activities of appropriate law enforcement agencies, aided by Europe's Interpol. What most fascinates me about the book, however, are the pictures of the Mafia at play, relaxed and respectable, as at the meeting in Apalachin.

"According to strict protocol, there was much bowing and handshaking. There were also emotional embraces as cousins and other close relations met and greeted each other. Most of the guests were dressed in immaculate light suits of Italian silk, white-on-white shirts, and highly polished shoes of soft leather. The majority were in their late fifties and early sixties—dignified, even pompous."

It takes generations of interbreeding among dedicated patina of stuffy respectability. J.B.

"They're holding out for even **higher** level negotiations ... Zeus, Apollo, Hera, Mars ..."

From a Greek . . . A Noble Work

ODYSSEY SEQUEL NEW MASTERPIECE

By WILLIAM D. PATTERSON

WITH A MEASURED sense of responsibility it can be reported that the distinguished Greek author, Nikos Kazantzakis, has achieved a noble masterwork in his long epic poem, "The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel" (Simon & Schuster).

It is a rare and thrilling experience to encounter an authentic masterpiece at any time. A critic or reader is fortunate in a lifetime of reading to discover a single such work, wrought full-blown by a contemporary. Masterpieces seemed to be inherited from the past after the winnowing of the years.

But Kazantzakis has scaled the noblest heights of creativity.

His massive work is not a modern translation of Homer. Three times the length of the original Odyssey, it is a freshly created sequel, a work of poetic art which Homer would not be ashamed to acknowledge.

Credit must also be given the translator of this classic, Kimon Friar, an American poet and teacher of Greek descent who has, through his own artistic talent and dedication, transmuted Kazantzakis' work triumphantly into English.

This volume, not so much a book or a poem as a monument, has stood out like a sort of universal landmark among books being most widely read and enjoyed.

The 33,333 lines of Kazantzakis' epic add up to a mighty exploration of the human soul by a man who was a master not only of many languages, but of philosophy and of the highest reaches of the art of poetry.

The sequel opens at the final moment in Homer's Odyssey when the home-coming Odysseus has slaughtered the suitors of his wife, Penelope. Describing this scene, Kazantzakis writes, ". . . his loins and belly steamed and thick black blood dripped down from both his murderous palms."

It immediately becomes clear that Odysseus is not fated to remain in Ithaca, but is God-driven to return to his voyages on a long quest that will end only in his death. This quest takes him through the seven stages of the human soul represented by Bestiality, Battle-Hunger, Lust, Pure Intellect, Despair, Detachment and finally Pure Soul. Each stage in the poem is an episode of great drama, intellectual power and poetic beauty.

Despite the length of this work, the reader moves ahead with a sense of mounting excitement and wonder that grows steadily until the final climactic moment when Odysseus, far at the South Pole, filled with pity for all mankind and in a furious joy at the purifying power of his own indomitable will, dies, and his soul flames upward into the universal all and nothingness.

In writing of his decision to use Odysseus as his vehicle for exploring man's fate, Kazantzakis said:

"You know that my particular leader is not one of the three leaders of the human spirit: neither Faust, nor Hamlet, nor Don Quixote, but only Don Odysseus . . . I have not the unquenchable thirst of the occidental mind, nor do I sway between yes and no to no end in immobility, nor do I any longer possess the sublimely ludicrous urge of the noble battler of windmills. I am a mariner of Odysseus with heart afire but with mind ruthless and clear; not, however, of that Odysseus who returned to Ithaca and stayed there, but of that other Odysseus who returned, killed his enemies and, stifled in his native land, put out to sea once more."

The word "masterpiece" has been cheapened in much current critical usage. The word no longer has the ring of good gold coin, but this tale of Kazantzakis' bull-hero, "that other Odysseus," will have the ring of solid gold in the mind and passions of any reader prepared to embark with him on his final, fate-driven, epic voyage to the ends of the earth.

THE STAMP PACKET

By R. M. Angus

VERSATILE COLLECTOR

For those collectors of Canadian stamps who are more or less advanced specialists, there is no handbook to compare with Fred Jarrett's "Stamps of British North America."

Published in 1929 at a price of $5, it is now a comparatively scarce book and cannot be purchased much under $30, but it contains such a wealth of information and pages of excellent woodcuts of all known cancellations of Canada that it is well worth the money.

Besides philately, Jarrett has many accomplishments. At one time he was typist champion of Canada and an exponent of the Gregg shorthand system. Although little known personally in the West, he is probably the best known philatelist in Eastern Canada. Until a few years ago he paid an annual visit to Victoria to confer with the department of education.

The writer first met him in 1924 when he visited me with the dummy of his forthcoming book, then in its early stages. His yearly visits after the book was completed always meant a memorable evening with half a dozen keen philatelists at the Empress Hotel. A born raconteur, he could entertain us to a hilarious evening, usually accompanied by a display of some part of his amazing collection.

During the First World War Jarrett was private secretary to the late Sir Edward Kemp when the latter was elevated by the Borden government to a new liaison post of minister to the overseas military forces of Canada. When time came to sail Sir Edward was informd by headquarters that while he could sail as a civilian passenger, Jarrett could not accompany him as military staff aide unless he was in uniform. Secretary Jarrett then entered a period of rapid transformation, becoming first a private, then corporal, sergeant and staff-sergeant within the space of a few hours. He sailed, armed with a roll of documents which testified to the fact that he, "the Central Ontario Battalion," was proceeding overseas "for duty on behalf of king and country." A one-man battalion!

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On May 1 the Union of South Africa will issue a new 3d stamp to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns (South African Academy of Science and Art). The design consists of the crest of the academy on a blue background, with wording in both English and Africaans. Printing will be in sheets of 120 and the stamp will remain on sale approximately three months from the date of issue.

In Great Britain, a special date-stamp inscribed, Stampex, Central Hall, London, S.W.I., will be issued by the post office on all correspondence posted at the temporary office at the exhibition from March 13 to 21.